

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 306011
ORIGIN ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, XA, CU

SUBJECT: TEXT OF NOON BRIEFING, 12/20/77

Q. HODDING, DO YOU HAVE THE FIGURES FOR THE CUBAN AND
RUSSIAN MILITARY ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA? I THINK LAST
WEEK--

A. THE BEST I CAN GIVE YOU ON THAT IS THAT -- LET ME START
OFF WITH WHERE THE FIGURES WERE AND TELL YOU ROUGHLY WHERE
WE THINK THEY ARE.

BEFORE THE AIRLIFT BEGAN IN LATE NOVEMBER WE BELIEVED THAT
THERE WERE ABOUT 400 CUBANS, ABOUT 250 SOVIET MILITARY
ADVISERS, IN ETHIOPIA.

Q. THIS IS WHEN?

A. LATE NOVEMBER

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 306011

Q. THE FIGURE WAS 100.

A. YES, BUT BY LATE NOVEMBER I THINK THEY HAD IT UP TO
150.

THAT IS CORRECT. WHEN I GAVE YOU THAT READ OUT BEFORE THAT
100 WAS THE FIGURE AND THEN 250.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US NOW INDICATES THAT IN RECENT WEEKS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED. THAT IS THE ACCUMULATIVE TOTAL. AND PERHAPS EVEN TRIPLED.

NOW, THERE IS A PROBLEM HERE. I MEAN I AM OBVIOUSLY NOT BEING VERY PRECISE WITH YOU. THE REASON IS THAT WE DO NOT FEEL CAPABLE OF BEING VERY PRECISE NOW. THE DOUBLE FIGURE I WOULD TAKE AS A GIVEN. HOW MUCH MORE THAN THAT I AM NOT PREPARED TO SAY RIGHT NOW. WE HAVE NO DOUBTS WHATSOEVER THAT THE TOTAL FIGURE HAS INCREASED IN GENERAL IN THAT ORDER OF MAGNITUDE, HOWEVER.

Q. THAT IS DOUBLED FROM THE 650?

A. YES. DOUBLED FROM THE 650.

Q. IS THERE ANY WAY OF QUANTIFYING WHICH OF THAT IS SOVIET?

A. NO. I WILL TELL YOU I WOULD HAVE DONE THAT IF WE WERE MORE CERTAIN ABOUT IT. WE ARE WORKING ON THAT. WHEN I CAN GIVE YOU A BETTER FIGURE BREAKING DOWN THE TOTAL I WILL.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 306011

Q. WOULD YOU SAY THAT THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES ON BOTH SIDES OR IS IT MOSTLY CUBANS?

A. I THINK THEY ARE SUBSTANTIAL ON BOTH SIDES. AS I UNDERSTAND IT, SUBSTANTIAL ON BOTH SIDES.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING?

A. WHAT THEY ARE DOING?

Q. WHAT THEY ARE DOING SPECIFICALLY.

A. NO, EXCEPT OPERATING AS MILITARY TRAINERS AND ADVISERS.

Q. HAVE YOU ANY INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION OF THE SOMALIA CHARGE THAT CUBANS ARE INVOLVED IN COMBAT IN THE OGADEN?

A. NO. I DON'T HAVE ANY BETTER GUIDANCE ON THAT THAN I HAD WHEN I SPOKE TO YOU BEFORE, WHICH IS SIMPLY THAT WHILE THE ASSERTION IS MADE CONSTANTLY THE CUBANS ARE NOT INVOLVED IN MILITARY ACTIVITY, THAT THE NATURE OF AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR WORK WILL BRING THEM CLOSER PERHAPS TO THE

ZONE. MAYBE YES, MAYBE NO. BUT WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION ON MASSIVE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE MILITARY.

Q. COULD YOU GIVE ANY QUANTITATIVE ESTIMATE ON HOW MUCH EQUIPMENT IS BEING BROUGHT IN?

A. NOT YET.

Q. HODDING, ONCE AGAIN WE HAVE MORE INCREASE IN CUBANS.

WHAT DOES THE SECRETARY FEEL CAN BE DONE TO MOTIVATE MR. CASTRO TO STOP SENDING MORE TROOPS TO AFRICA OTHER THAN WORDS, WHICH WE HAVE BEEN EXCHANGING WITH HIM FOR SEVERAL MONTHS?

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 306011

A. THERE ARE LIMITED OPTIONS, OF COURSE, AVAILABLE, LES.

Q. WHAT? COULD YOU CITE ONE?

A. I AM SAYING BASICALLY WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS TO MAKE IT CLEAR WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT IS ABOUT THIS, AND WE HAVE MADE IT VERY CLEAR. IT IS VERY NEGATIVE. SECOND, TO RAISE THE POSSIBILITIES OF WHAT SUCH AN INCREASE HOLDS OUT FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH CUBA.

Q. WE HAVE DONE THAT.

A. WE HAVE DONE THAT.

BEYOND THAT, LES, THERE IS NOT TOO MUCH AT THIS POINT THAT IS ENVISIONED.

Q. I WONDERED. CERTAINLY UNTIL THE TUNNEY AMENDMENT, AS I RECALL, WE WERE POURING EQUIPMENT INTO MR. SAVIMBI WHO SEEMS TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL AGAINST THE CUBANS, NUMBER ONE, AND, NUMBER TWO, WE HAVE CERTAINLY BACKED LIBERATION, SO-CALLED, LIBERATION GROUPS IN AFRICA. WHY IS IT THAT WE CAN'T BACK LIBERATION GROUPS IN MIAMI?

A. THAT CURVE CAUGHT ME COMING AROUND THE BEND?

Q. IT WASN'T INTENDED. IT WAS A STRAIGHT HARDBALL.

A. IT SLIPPED OVER THE PLATE WHILE I WASN'T LOOKING.

Q. I MEAN PEOPLE ARE IN FAVOR OF LIBERATION OF CUBA AND THEY ARE IN MIAMI AND CUBA NEEDS TO BE LIBERATED, I THINK.
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 306011

A. IT IS A MATTER OF POLICY, AS YOU KNOW, WHICH WE EXPRESSED HERE SOME MONTHS AGO, THAT WE DO NOT WISH TO SUPPORT ASSAULTS ON OTHER PEOPLE'S TERRITORY FROM OURS.

Q. HODDING, WHAT IS THE USE OF TYING THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA TO IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA IF CASTRO HIMSELF HAS SAID THAT THERE IS NO LINK AT ALL IN THAT, HE DOESN'T LINK IT?

A. IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO AND WE DO NOT LINK IT.

Q. SO, THAT MEANS THERE IS A STALEMATE IN THE WHOLE PROCESS.

A. IT CERTAINLY CALLS INTO DOUBT, AS I SAID BEFORE, THE WHOLE PROCESS.

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